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Subject Matter

Pellagra in the Life of Jem and Dave a Southern Mountain Couple

Type of Presentation

Current Drama

Approximate Length

Six Minutes

Source

"LISTEN AMERICA"

(Women's National Emergency Committee and NBC)

6-C-2

1871
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PELLAGRA IN THE LIFE OF JEM AND DAVE A SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN COUPLE(MUSIC.....AND UNDER)

ANNOUNCER: Listen to the story of Jem, the young, Southern mountain wife of Dave, married without any money but plenty of love and high hope. For a year they have scrimped and sweated and starved to clear their little mountain farm (MUSIC OUT) Now Dave is (FADE IN TREE CHOPPING) felling a tree as Jem brings his lunch.

SOUND: (LONG SPLITTING AND CRACKING)

DAVE: (LOUDLY) There she goes! -- Look out, Jem!

SOUND: (LOUD WHOOSH AND CRASH AS TREE FALLS)

DAVE: Whew! -- Look, Jemmie, this one was a great-granddaddy.

JEM: (ENTERING DULLY) It's big all right....here's your lunch, Davey. Set down and start eatin'. You work like a mule and you got to be fed.

DAVE: (WORRIED) Then you set down next to me in the shade, Jem-- you feelin' bad again?

JEM: Never mind about me. Go on and eat. Tain't much but I found two aigs for you.

DAVE: (TRYING TO PLEASE HER) Now what do I want with a lot of vittles when I got such a pretty wife setting by me.

JEM: (PITIFULLY) There's no use your sayin' that, Davey. Tain't so. I know I ain't pretty any more. I done my best n' I brush my hair every night and I wash my face in cold water.. but (BEGINNING TO WEEP) I'm gettin' sick and homely. I don't want to see my face in the mirror no more -- ever.

DAVE: You'll always be pretty to me, Jem --

JEM: (GETTING EXCITED) You leave me alone. Ain't no use lyin'. You don't fool me. -- not a bit! (ALMOST SHOUTING)

DAVE: (BEWILDERED) Jem -- sometimes -- you ain't like my girl any more.

JEM: (WEeping) No, I ain't! I ain't nothin' at all - no good for work - no good for nothin'. I wish I was dead!

DAVE: Oh, Jem. --!

JEM: (WITH COLD FURY) You think I don't know about you and Alice? --'n, why you're always walkin' down into the valley--

DAVE: But Jemmie, I just go to fetch things and come back as quick as I can --

JEM: (VIOLENTLY) Quick as you can! -- (SNEERING) Quick as Alice will let you! -- And ain't she pretty, though! N' she's got such a nice parlor for you to set in! (WITH A SOB) She ain't got just one bare room, like me!

DAVE: I've never been inside her house, Jem -- and what's gone wrong with ours? You thought it was so fine you cried over it when it was built.

JEM: Well, I've been cryin' in it since! -- settin' there a-crying all alone -- and my mind goin' around and around 'til I was so wild I could take an axe to both of you!

DAVE: But Jemmie -- I don't want nobody but you --

JEM: (SNEERING) "You don't want nobody but me!" (FURIOUSLY) Don't you lie to me! You're crazy after Alice, and you're hopin' maybe I'll die so you can marry her -- Well, maybe I will -- but you're gonna die first --

DAVE: Jem! You put down that axe!

JEM: (SCREAMING) I'm gonna kill you! -- kill you! You're married to me and you're gonna die that way - you hear me?

DAVE: Let go of the axe! (YANKS IT AWAY) - Let go!

JEM: Give it back to me! Give it back! - I'm gonna kill you --

MORE

JEM: You'll never go to Alice (SCREAMING) Never! Never!!
(CONT.)

(MUSIC BRIDGE...)

DOCTOR: Well, young man, I understand you carried your wife all
the way down the mountain.

DAVE: Doctor, she was yelling, like crazy, every step of the way.

DOCTOR: ... She was crazy, David, raving mad. A few years ago they
would have locked her up -- but today the science of
nutrition has put some miraculous new cures in our hands.
Well -- Jem is entirely well again, David.

DAVE: Do you really mean it, Doctor? You ain't just tryin' to
cheer me?

DOCTOR: Go on in and see for yourself, David.

SOUND: (DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE)

DAVID: (ENTERING SOFTLY) Jemie! -- are you asleep?

JEM: (SOFTLY) Davie! Oh, Davie, I've been lyin' here a-dreamin'.

DAVE: Dreamin' what, darling?

JEM: Such a nice dream, Davie -- about our mountain, and the
garden we're going to have -- (MUSIC STARTS VERY SOFTLY)
with the corn rustlin' so green, and the whip-poor-wills
callin' so soft when the dark comes down -- and about our
beautiful house, Davie, and our one room I cried in. Only--
only I ain't cryin' in that room no more, Davie. I ain't
cryin' no more!

(MUSIC CURTAIN)

(APPLAUSE)

ANNOUNCER: It is truly a modern miracle, this quick, sure cure of
pellagrous insanity, like Jem's. Only for the past three
years has this cure been possible. It is brought about by
MORE

ANNOUNCER: injecting pure cyrstil vitamins -- particularly the vitamin
(CONT.) we call niocin. Jem is well and will stay well of
pellagra as long as she has the right kind of food.....